



UCONN
Hillel

2022-2023

ACADEMIC YEAR

IMPACT REPORT



A MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

As we enjoyed the excitement around the success of UConn’s basketball program during our 2022-23 academic year, we celebrated some of our own “slam dunks” right here at Hillel. From increasing our student engagement by 20% to launching our first-ever FYSH Fest (First Year Students of Hillel early-arrival program) to traveling to Israel on our inaugural Maccabee Task Force interfaith trip to hosting our hugely successful Shabbat Across Storrs, we built Jewish community in new and dynamic ways.



As many of today’s students are most likely to identify as “just Jewish” and aren’t always sure what they need or want from Judaism, we continually strive to best meet students “where they are,” literally and figuratively. Through expanded outreach beyond the Trachten-Zachs Hillel house, including a “teaching Seder” in the UConn Recreation Center and expanded partnerships with faith-based organizations and cultural clubs, we were able to reach more students than ever before.

We continue to prioritize ensuring that Hillel remains a safe space for Jewish students, where they feel secure in their identity. Through our Campus Climate Initiative, we continue taking the lead in partnership with senior administration, identifying opportunities for improvements in institutional policies, communication, and education for the university community.



As we celebrate the accomplishments of this past year, we eagerly anticipate the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead, confident that UConn Hillel will continue to thrive as a vibrant and inclusive home for all.



EDINA OESTREICHER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



LORI BADEN
BOARD PRESIDENT

UConn HILLEL

A HOME AWAY FROM HOME

UConn Hillel created a home away from home for nearly **800** students, providing a place where they could explore Judaism on their own terms. Students were invited to attend student-led Shabbat services and to enjoy a free kosher dinner every Friday night, in addition to the numerous other Jewish holidays and spiritual opportunities offered throughout the year.

We offered a First Year Students of Hillel (FYSH) mentoring program that paired new students with current Hillel leaders to help them feel welcomed in our community and on campus. We value the opportunities we have to support students in ways the larger university community can't, therefore building a strong Jewish presence for new students.

Two of our favorite programs were The Hummus Experience and Shabbat Across Storrs. The Hummus Experience is run like an episode of 'Chopped' where contestants need to use pre-selected ingredients to create their own Hummus - it's been a favorite for years! At Shabbat Across Storrs, over 250 students participated, creating new Shabbat experiences with friends in their own spaces.



“

I remember last fall feeling kind of lonely because it was my first semester at UConn Storrs and still didn't know a lot of people at the time. I helped build the Sukkah and I met many other students there who made me feel like I was a part of Hillel. The experience made me want to develop more friendships and stronger ties with Hillel and its warm, inviting community. Since then, I've had the opportunity to become a wellness ambassador and to become more involved with the community so I can pay that feeling forward.



ALEX SPILIOTIS, '23
Wellness Ambassador

”



“

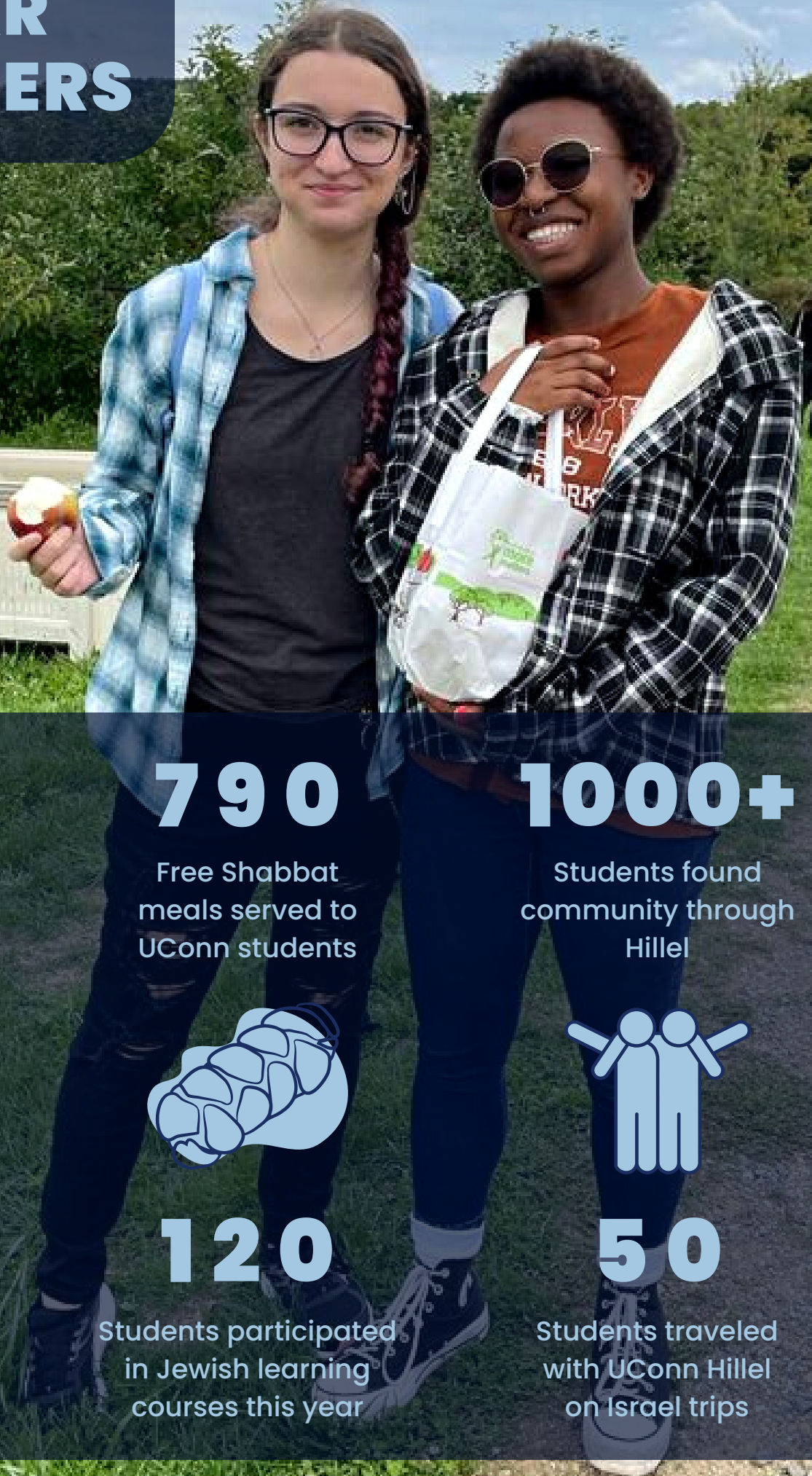
Hillel is such a great place and honestly had the biggest impact on my adjustment to UConn. I loved FYSH (First Year Students of Hillel) Fest and also had the chance to become a member of the Hillel Board. By planning events, Shabbats and other holiday celebrations, I hope to help other students have the same amazing experiences I've had.

BRIAN OPPENHEIM, '25
Co-VP of Jewish Life

”



OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS



35

Students gained direct leadership experience



75

First Year Students connected with us at UConn Hillel

790

Free Shabbat meals served to UConn students



120

Students participated in Jewish learning courses this year

1000+

Students found community through Hillel



50

Students traveled with UConn Hillel on Israel trips

NOTHING BUT NET

UCONN HILLEL'S SLAM DUNK YEAR



DORON SHEFFER: An MVP Conversation

In February, we were fortunate enough to host Doron Sheffer, a former UConn basketball star and retired Israeli professional basketball player, for a conversation about Jewish values in basketball and in life at the Trachten-Zachs Hillel House. He spoke to us about his book, *Mensch VP: Becoming the Most Valuable Player in the Game of Life*. Doron shared about his personal Jewish journey and connection to Judaism.

This event was possible through our partnership with UConn Global Affairs and UConn Chabad.



ISRAEL DISCOVERY TRIP: Parlor Meeting

In an intimate gathering, friends and supporters of UConn Hillel came together for a delightful parlor meeting at the home of UConn President Emeritus, UConn Hillel Board Member, and political expert **Dr. Susan Herbst**.

There, over delicious food and warm conversations, attendees learned about UConn Hillel's newly established partnership with the Maccabee Task Force. We discussed how the trip aims to bring students from diverse backgrounds together to encourage unique perspectives and respectful dialogue around Israel and the Middle East.

ISRAEL

TRIPS | PROGRAMS | EDUCATION

During the Academic Year, UConn Hillel offered several Israel-related activities and learning opportunities, including an Israel Learning Fellowship (ILF). ILF is a six-week learning course for students to learn and engage in conversations about different aspects of Israel. The fellowship provides the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the contemporary Israel landscape and learn how to have productive conversations with those who have differing views.

Throughout the year, we engaged over **400** students in Israeli programming – culturally, spiritually, and educationally – here at UConn and abroad in Israel! Students traveled to Israel on our Winter and Summer Birthright Trips, and an additional student cohort from diverse backgrounds had their own alternative Discovery Trip sponsored by Maccabee Task Force.

Students participated at different levels and learned from our Israel Fellow, Sapir. Favorite events included our Hummus Experience, Israeli Cooking Class cohort, and our spring semester Israel Fest where hundreds of students joined us!

“

Embarking on my Birthright journey with UConn Hillel to Israel was not just a trip, but a transformative experience that ignited a passion within me. Now, back on campus, I'm inspired to dive deeper, connect more, and make a difference. Israel wasn't just a destination; it became a catalyst for my involvement and growth.

”

YANA TARTAKOVSKIY, '25



DEVELOPMENT



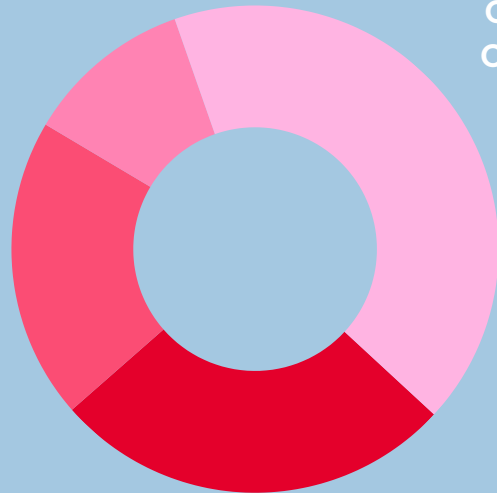
440+

INDIVIDUAL
SUPPORTERS DURING
THE 2022-23
ACADEMIC YEAR

**INCLUDING
146 NEW
DONORS**

10%
CAME FROM
PARENTS

18%
CAME FROM
ALUMNI



38%
CAME FROM
COMMUNITY
MEMBERS

34%
CAME FROM
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“

When I've participated in other organized Jewish events in the past, I often felt like a guest in someone else's home.

But, at UConn Hillel, I feel that I am home.

”

MICHAEL RAIZIN, '25

OUR MISSION

UConn Hillel, the Center for Jewish Life, fosters inclusive and meaningful experiential opportunities to enrich the lives of students and help them explore Judaism and Jewish values on their own terms.

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